History of the Durham Fire Department

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

First fire station, Blackwell St.
1880s

Station 1
1891

Station 2
1892

New Sta 2
1903

Excelsior H&L moves to city stables
c1903-04

Station 3
1911

Station 4
1914

Housed ladder company behind Station 1. When did it close?

Sta 1 closed
1924

New Sta 1 rebuilt on same site
1925

New Sta 4
1926

Sta 3 remodeled
1931

New Sta 2
1950

New Sta 3
1953

New Sta 4
1958

New Sta 4 was activated with a newly hired crew of black firefighters. The white company at Sta 4 was moved to Old Sta 4, and then to new Sta 5 when it opened in 1960.

Station 5
1960

New Sta 1
1964

Stations 6, 7
1969

Station 8
1974

Station 9
1977

Station 10
1984

Station was completed in 1978

Stations 11, 12
1990

Sta 1 remodeled
1994-95

Station 13, New Sta 3
1998

Engine 8 moved to new Sta 3

Station 8 Closes
1998

New Sta 4
1999

Station 14
2000

New Sta 8
2005

Station 16
2006

Station 15
2010

Construction started in 2013

New Sta 9
2017

Stations 17, 18, 19
2018

New Sta 18
2023

City purchases first fire equipment
1872

Chemical engine added
1880

By July 1880, the city had a hand [?] truck with hooks, ladders, and buckets.

New ladder wagon
1896

First steamer (LaFrance)
1903

Second steamer (ALF), First motor hose truck (Webb)
1912

First motor pumper (ALF), First motor ladder (ALF)
1915

Also delivered during the decade, two 1918 White pumpers

First Ahrens-Fox pumper
1924

First aerial ladder (ALF)
1926

Also delivered during the 1920s, two more Ahrens-Fox apparatus: a 1925 pumper and a 1928 service ladder.

Two Seagrave pumpers
1934

Two auxiliary trucks added
1941

Also delivered during the 1940s: two Seagrave pumpers of 1943 and 1949 model years.

New service ladder (Mack)
1947

First County pumper
1948

New aerial ladder (ALF)
1949

First Ford/Darley pumper
1952

Also delivered during the 1950s: a second Ford/Darley pumper, a Seagrave pumper, and two ALF pumpers.

First rescue truck (GMC)
1960

First International/ALF pumper
1964

County tanker added
1966

Also delivered during the 1960s: a replacement GMC rescue and two more International/ALF pumpers.

First aerial platform, First WLF custom pumper
1971

First yellow apparatus (Ford/Bean)
1974

First Sutphen aerial platform
1976

Also delivered during the mid-late 1970s: a Chevy/Murphy rescue, four more WLF custom pumpers, five Ford pumpers by WLF, Howe, and Sutphen, and a second Sutphen platform.

Also delivered during the 1980s: six more Ford pumpers built by Atlas and EEI, a GMC/EEI tanker, a Duplex/Grumman aerial platform, and a new Ford chassis for the rescue truck.

City tanker added
1986?

First haz-mat truck
1987

First E-One pumpers
1990

Also delivered during the 1990s: six more E-One pumpers, a Sutphen aerial platform, and a new International chassis for the rescue truck.

First mobile support unit
1997

First Sutphen aerial ladder
2000

Deliveries during the 2000s also included three International pumpers by E-One (2) and Toyne (1), two more Spartan pumpers by Crimson (1) and M&W (1), three more Sutphen custom pumpers, and four more Sutphen aerials.

First Spartan/Crimson pumper
2005

First Sutphen custom pumper
2007

First heavy rescue truck, Tankers and brush trucks added
2018

Rescue 1 not placed in service until 2019

Citizen meeting to organize fire company,
1876

Chemical Fire Co. organized
1880

Hook & Ladder Co. organized, later named Excelsior Co., First black Firefighters
c1885

Dick Blacknall Fire Co. #1 organized
1887

Independent Fire Co. organized / Later named Gold Belt Co. [?], Fire commission created, First fire chief [?], First fire hydrants
1888

First Fire Alarm System
1891

Volunteer Era

First fire code, Police and fire commission created
1909

Career Fire Department Created
1909

Excelsior fire co. members replaced by white firefighters
1913

Last horse-drawn apparatus retired
1918

Fire alarm system upgrade
1924

First aerial ladder company, training tower erected
1926

First fire inspector
1927

Two-platoon schedule starts
1938

First IAFF charter
1940

Squad program (mini-pumper) starts
1941

72-hour work week starts
1947

First modern fire helmets
1954

First career black firefighters
1958

Rescue truck added
1960

New IAFF charter
1968

First EMTs, Assigned to rescue
1969

56-hour work week starts, Drill tower closed
1970

Public safety program starts
1971

First female firefighter
1975

Ladder 3 activated
1976

Training center opens
1977

Public Safety Program

Public safety program ends, First battalion chiefs (2)
1985

Haz-mat team organized
1986

First fire academy
1986

New IAFF charter
1987

This followed 22 public safety academies between 1971 and 1985.

Honor Guard organized
1992

First responder program started
1993

800mhz Radio System, Admin relocated
1995

Technical Rescue Team Created, Squad Program (EMS/Rescue) starts
1996

Chaplain Program starts
1998

Rescue 1 deactivated, EMT-Intermediate added, First quint company (L7)
2000

Battalion 3 added
2001

NC USAR Task Force 8 operational
2003

Ladders Moved, L1 to L3, L11 to L6
2013

Class 2 rating achieved
2015

Stations, equipment, and personnel added with county merger, including new Battalion 4 and Division Chief
2018

Rescue 1 reactivated
2019

Administration expanded into Sta 1
2022

County Fire and Rescue Services

From 1948 to 1985, DFD provided fire protection to unincorporated areas of Durham County, with an engine and a tanker at Station 1. The county funded both the trucks and the personnel.

In 1958, a city-county Civil Defense rescue squad was created, with members of the Durham Life Saving Corps. In 1960, the rescue squad and its operation was moved to DFD.

The public safety program merged the fire and police departments. Public Safety Officer (PSO) positions were created, serving dual roles as law officers who also performed fire suppression. Staffing of fire stations and fire companies was reduced, with PSOs replacing many firefighter positions. The program ended in 1985.

By 1985, five volunteer FDs provided protection in the county: Bahama, Bethesda, Lebanon, Parkwood, and Redwood. The need for city-based county resources had waned and the county engine and tanker were retired that year.

In 2018, Durham County Fire-Rescue merged with the Durham FD. It was driven by factors ranging from a 2013 fire district consolidation feasibility study—itself a response to shrinking county fire districts and expanding city limits—to a formal proposal in 2016 by the leaders of both departments.

Durham County Fire-Rescue Merges with Durham FD
2018

Line of Duty Deaths

1946 – Frank W. Bennett
1957 – Joseph A Chandler
1970 – Ernest V. Wilkie
1978 – Gary E. Fletcher
2018 – David W. Page

Created by Mike Legeros
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